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SIPDIS

FOR NEA/MAG (MNARDI, VSTEWART, JPATTERSON)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KEDM](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: TUNISIA DOES NOT ACCEPT THE MAURITANIAN COUP BUT
WILL NOT MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT

REF: A. A) STATE 84915
[B. B\) STATE 91116](#)
[C. C\) TUNIS 903](#)
[D. D\) TUNIS 917](#)

Classified By: Ambassador Robert F. Godec for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) The Ambassador raised the Mauritanian military coup during his August 29 meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdelwaheb Abdallah stressing the strong and growing opposition to it. The Minister,s said the GOT responded immediately through the Arab Maghreb Union. he also cited Tunisia's membership in the Arab League and the African Union and noted those institutions had also registered opposition to the coup. He said the new government in Mauritania knows the GOT's position very well, especially the concern it has for former president Abdallahi being under house arrest. He did not give any indication that the GOT would consider issuing its own public statement condemning the coup.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador passed Abdallah a non paper (delivered earlier via diplomatic note as well) detailing the US position and the statement by the President of the UNSC. The Ambassador encouraged the GOT to make a public statement condemning the coup. The Minister responded saying, "we were among the first to react to the coup." He said, President Ben Ali and Libyan leader Col. al-Qadhafi directed the Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) to go to Nouakchott and deliver a protest on behalf of the Maghreb leaders immediately after the coup (reftel b). He added that Tunis, unlike some other Maghreb countries, had not agreed to receive a special delegation from the new military government. Then he concluded the Mauritanian junta knows the GOT's position very well, especially its concern that a legally elected president like Abdallahi is essentially being held in prison. The Minister regretted that Maghreb Union is unable to agree on actions with respect to political issues due to internal differences.

[1](#)3. (C) Although Abdallah appeared to be expressing the GOT,s genuine opposition to the coup; he made it clear that it was not inclined to make any public statement except in the context of a group. The Ambassador explained that a public statement of opposition would be useful in pressing the Mauritanian military to reverse its actions. Abdallah agreed that the overthrow of Mauritania,s democratically elected president, which had been a progressive symbol for Africa, was a serious blow against democracy and had no legitimacy. However, he said, by rejecting the Mauritanian delegation, sending the Secretary General of the AMU to Nouakchott, joining in statements from the Arab League and the African Union Peace and Security Commission, Tunisia has made its public position clear. Now, the Minister said, he was waiting to see whether the military regime will implement its commitments to restore democracy. Abdallah ended by saying that Tunisia has interests there. There is a sizable Tunisian community in Mauritania and they also have

commercial interests including telephone and airline
companies.
GODEC